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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides guidelines for parents in encouraging their daughters to participate in and enjoy athletic activities. Brief discussions are presented on: (1) the value of sport; (2) girls' needs at different age levels; (3) guidelines for supportive behavior; (4) special needs of the female athlete; (5) parent/child/coach relationship; (6) volunteering; (7) do's and don'ts for teaching and coaching your own child; and (8) sport in the family. A young athlete's bill of rights is included. (JD)

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PARENT'S GUIDE TO GIRLS' SPORTS

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Competition.

It's the American way. It's part of our daily lives — striving to be the best we can be in athletics, business, scholastics, government and even as parents and educators.

The competitive spirit, however, must be learned, starting with those early, character-shaping years. Spirited competition is within the human spirit waiting to be nurtured and developed for real-world application throughout one's life.

We at Adolph Coors Company are committed to fostering the spirit of competition. With this basic tenet in mind, Coors is proud to contribute to the publication of this booklet and to its ideals.

The knowledge presented herein was gathered from the best available sources in their respective fields. It is our hope that you will be as enthusiastic to apply it, as we are in presenting it to you.

Peter H. Coors
President, Brewing Division

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"You and your child can have fun together participating in sports. At the same time you'll be setting a natural example for her to develop a lifelong interest in sport participation."
Peggy Fleming Jenkins
Figure Skating
gold medalist

THE VALUE OF SPORT

The sports world provides an exceptional opportunity for every child to experience individual growth and development in a number of areas. More specifically, your daughter can reap the benefits of physical, social, and psychological growth through involvement in athletics. Let's briefly look at each of these areas.

PHYSICAL

Participation in athletics trains the young female to become more aware of her body's physical capabilities. She will develop greater cardiovascular capacity, and greater strength and flexibility. In general, she will become more physically fit, a dimension that becomes more important as we all get older. In addition, the concern for fitness can become a lifestyle for her early on, rather than something she may try to develop later in life.

SOCIAL

The social benefits of sports participation are numerous. Meeting new and different friends from various cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds provides a solid base for later social interactions. Learning the efforts and rewards of teamwork, cooperation, and sharing toward a common goal builds values that have long-range effects, not only in a young woman's social and personal life but later in her professional life as well.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

The list of character attributes that can be attained through sports participation is indeed very long. Self-esteem, leadership, independence, assertiveness, pride, and confidence are just some of the traits necessary to a successful competitor in athletics. More important, they are traits with carry-over values that will enable your daughter to be better prepared in any walk of life.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that sports and athletics play a vital role in the culture of this country. Sport permeates every aspect of our life from the economy to entertainment, from feelings of personal pride to civic and community success.

Involvement in sports may mean belonging to a team or participating in a wide variety of activities. In addition to team sports, it may involve individual competitive sports such as track or gymnastics, or lifetime sports such as aerobics, swimming, and camping. The keys are having fun, the physical activity, and the personal challenge.

"The best role for a parent is to be a fan, not an extra coach."
Bonny Warner
National luge champion

Supporting your daughter's participation in athletics is a message from you that she is an integral part of this society on every level; that she is entitled to develop the skills of cooperation and competition that have made the United States the great country it is; and that she can be an attractive, feminine young woman and simultaneously develop a strong, skilled body that will allow her to be physically capable for her lifetime.

GIRLS' NEEDS AT DIFFERENT AGE LEVELS

"The energy, the enthusiasm and the joy of being a kid are wonderful things. Exposure to sport is a healthy way to nurture this natural drive."
Lt. Col. Micki King Hogue
Diving gold medalist

If your daughter is to gain the maximum from her sport experience, it is important to understand her as a growing, changing person. Children go through various stages of psychological, as well as physical development. This concept may be difficult to understand because we can see only physical development; psychological development cannot be as readily observed. In sport participation a child goes through four physical and psychological stages. It is important for the parents to note that at each stage the development of the child as a whole person is more important than her athletic accomplishment. Achievement will fall into place later if the parents provide the early psychological groundwork.

AGES 1-6: THE INTEREST STAGE

The earliest years in sport should center primarily around having fun, sharing with playmates, exploring new experiences, having many opportunities to be active, and getting a feel for what sport is all about as well as learning basic movement skills.

Because children are naturally curious and active, this development will take little effort on the parents' part. Simple movement activities and spending time together is enough of a physical motivator for young children.

AGES 7-11: THE INDUSTRIOUS STAGE

This is a critical period for your daughter as she enters and adjusts to the world outside her home. There are rules, regulations, and other demands that she will need to follow.

The sport world represents a big step. For the first time your daughter is learning how to compete through sports. She must learn the fundamentals of a new skill and feel she is making progress while many times also making a contribution to a team. In some sports there may be an adjustment to playing coeducationally; during this period, girls often compete with and against boys for the first time — a major step in a girl's developmental life.

Strong positive family support, along with positive guidance from the coach, are vital at this point. The competitive sport experience must be a positive one for it to continue: otherwise your daughter may withdraw completely from physical activity.

AGES 12-14: THE IDENTIFICATION STAGE

During the junior high years your daughter is seeking her identity. It is a challenging time for an athletically talented female, since sports may not be a high priority on a young woman's list of interests and may not be highly regarded by her peers.

Once again, family support becomes a critical factor. Through some mature sharing between daughter and family, she must be helped to realize that it is acceptable to have an identity in sport as well as an identity as a female. At this age, it is particularly important for males to encourage and value participation of young women in sports.

AGES 15-19: THE INDEPENDENCE STAGE

Peer-group pressure and a sense of personal identity are important at this time in a young woman's life. This stage provides a challenge for the family because independence is being demanded on the one hand, while support is being sought on the other. The athletic world provides an excellent place for forming peer allegiances while also giving the adolescent independence from her family.

GUIDELINES

Parents interested in helping their daughter are immediately confronted with the question, "What do I do?" Of course you should not take over directly, making all the plans and telling your daughter what to do. On the other hand, should you leave it all up to her?

There is no simple solution because every family is different. However, there are some general guidelines. For example, the younger your child, the more direct and active you need to be. The older and more experienced your daughter, the more you need to play a supportive role. In general, here are some guidelines you might follow:

FUN

Athletics should be fun for your daughter. The more fun she has, the more she will want to continue the activity, and the longer she will enjoy the long-range benefits of athletics.

POSITIVENESS

Parents should be positive about their daughter's sports participation. Encouragement, support, commitment of volunteer time, lending a sympathetic ear, and paying compliments are all positive means through which parents can promote the child's participation. The use of threats, punishment, coercion, and fear, on the other hand, can make the experience psychologically painful, even if the child is athletically successful. Don't assume that if the child is successful, she is having fun. This is not always the case. Some successful athletes feel more anxiety and a greater pressure to win, which only makes the experience more demanding.

AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS

We have previously outlined the needs of the child at various age levels. If you are more concerned about fun, social interaction and skill development rather than the athletic achievement, it will show that you are "listening" to your daughter. Accomplishments will take place if the foundation is there — a foundation that is developed through noncritical instruction, practice, and encouragement.

PROCESS, NOT PRODUCT

Parents should pay attention to the effort, the progress, and the quality of the sport experience — not whether their daughter has won or lost. The product, the winning and losing, is very fleeting. It is the process, or effort, that is long remembered, especially if winning means sitting on the bench.

GROWTH EXPERIENCE

Parents need to view their daughter's athletic participation as an important step in her personal growth. Sport is a microcosm of real life. She is learning about a competitive lifestyle and a sense of fairness and cooperation through this experience. It is important, therefore, to step back and look at the larger picture. Ask yourself what benefits there are for her in the experience.

"The support of your parents gives you that special kind of confidence which is so vital in athletics."
Julianne McNamara
Gymnastics gold medalist

SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE FEMALE ATHLETE

Sometimes there are questions, worries, and doubts when the subject of girls and women in sports arises. The fact that this question is being raised suggests that it is important to address the issue. Here are some special concerns and questions frequently asked about females and sports:

CAN WOMEN DEAL WITH THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTENSITY OF COMPETITION?

Women are just as capable as males of dealing with intense sport competition. Present Olympic women's records in various sports exceed males' records of just a few years ago. In addition, women are involved in marathons and triathlons, long thought to be suited for men only. There is no reason to believe women are any less able to deal with the psychological intensity or the physical demands of sport than men.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR COACHING GIRLS?

Worries about coaching girls because they are "different" are unnecessary. It should be remembered, though, that in many cases girls have not had the opportunity to learn fundamental sport skills at an early age. Coaches need to be sensitive to this fact and be prepared to drill the basics, if necessary.

"If my father hadn't treated me just like my brother — always telling me I was capable of the best in whatever I did — I would never have made it to the Olympic victory stand."
Donna de Varona
Swimming gold medalist

SHOULD FEMALES COMPETE AGAINST MALES?

Prior to puberty females and males can play on the same team in any sport, provided they have had the same skill training. The physical differences in size and strength manifest themselves at about eleven years in females and thirteen years in males. After these ages males, in general, are taller, heavier, show greater speed, strength, power, and size due to the influence of testosterone. However, in many sports this is a major problem since skill, agility and coordination are primary determinators of success.

After puberty there are valid questions about contact or collision sports. In early adolescense, some girls have the ability to physically dominate boys. Therefore, matching by size, weight, and skill rather than by gender may be necessary. The evidence seems to indicate that grouping athletes into competitive categories not based on sex, but rather on skill level or size provides the greatest opportunity for growth and development for both gender groups.

However, at this age boys and girls are very sensitive to their perceived inadequacies, such as lack of size or skills. It is always important to help males and females feel they could compete, win, lose or draw without having their masculinity or femininity questioned.

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION?

The chance for females to participate in athletics is often diminished because there is not equal societal support. However, girls and women will participate if given an opportunity. In some instances women have developed their own teams and leagues in order to compete. The family needs to investigate the opportunities in their schools, the local private clubs, Y's, and local teams such as Little Leagues. If equal opportunities are not available, find out how to make them available. Equal opportunity is the law.

PARENT/CHILD/COACH RELATIONSHIP

One of the most important authority figures your daughter will encounter in her early years is the coach. This person has the power to control the amount of time your daughter plays and the quality of instruction she is given, providing an important medium through which your child can grow. The coach can help her to develop talent, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. In fact, most of the positive attributes of sports may rest in the hands of the coach. It is vital, therefore, that you get to know your daughter's coach and, more important, that you see the coach through your daughter's eyes. How can you do this? Here are several steps all parents can take to become better acquainted:

1. Make contact with the coach. Introduce yourself, initiate exchange on a personal level, and let the coach know you support him/her and are willing to help if necessary.

2. Attend games and practices to watch the coach operate. Some basic questions may be answered by this observation: Is the coach positive or negative in handling the children? Does he/she seem to have a feel for kids? Can he/she communicate with children? Does he/she show children respect? Is he/she process oriented (i.e., interested in development) or product oriented (concerned about winning only)? Does he/she seem to understand the needs of children at various age levels and does he/she tend to those needs? Does the coach give each child individual, personal attention?

3. Listen to comments made by the team members about the coach. Are they positive? Do the players admire the coach? Do they imitate the coach to show positive regard? Or do they fear the coach? Do they try to avoid practice? Do they talk with open dislike about what the coach is doing?

4. Listen to your daughter's impression of the coach. Since it is so important for her to feel she has an authority on her side, does she feel supported? If not, the parental support system becomes all the more important.

If you have some concerns about the coach, there are steps that can be taken:

1. Listen to your daughter and try to determine specifically where she is having difficulty. If the help provided by family support is not enough, contact with the coach is important — but only if it is discussed with your daughter and she gives permission.

2. Examine your own expectations and motives before approaching the coach. Sometimes a third person can give you a good perspective on this.

3. Approach the coach in a concerned, helpful manner. Find a quiet, private time to talk. If the coach fails to understand your concern and continues to act in a potentially destructive way, it may be necessary to transfer your child to another coach. This is rare since most coaches are willing to listen and to make changes as well.

VOLUNTEERING

Up to this point we have discussed the parents' role in their daughter's sport experience as primarily a supportive one. Why not get more involved in the process? You can make a significant contribution to your daughter, the other athletes on the team, the coach, the sport, and the community. You can be a volunteer.

Some people have negative thoughts about volunteering, but it is the most positive way of showing your daughter your support. By volunteering you are joining her. There are many jobs for a volunteer — all of which help sport function smoothly and efficiently.

The family often has questions about volunteering, such as when, what, and who? Here are some useful ideas:

WHEN

The best time to volunteer is before your child signs up for the sport, so that you can both start together. Other volunteers often do the registration, so they are in an excellent position to give you all the information you need. If your child is already in the group, ask the head coach, assistant coach, or a team official what you can do to contribute to the team or the club. Volunteers are always needed, and their work is deeply appreciated.

"Parents have to keep in mind whose aspirations they are encouraging."
Tracy Caulkins
Swimming gold medalist and record holder

WHO

Although fathers and other men have traditionally been more associated with sports, mothers and other women should also volunteer. Adult women are the role models for younger women. Through volunteering, mother and/or father and daughter can explore and share a new experience together. Mothers, in particular, can be viewed as positive models and fathers can demonstrate their support and approval for their daughter's sport skills and participation. The athletic experience can serve to strengthen the bond between you.

WHAT

There are many different tasks for the volunteer. Obviously, the important job of volunteer coach comes to mind, but there are numerous other jobs such as assistant coaching, record keeping, officiating, lining the fields, chaperoning trips, equipment managing, and scheduling. Each job is important and makes the sport experience more positive for the athletes.

Often parents do not wish to take on a volunteer coaching job because they feel they have an inadequate knowledge of the sport. However, especially in many sports involving young children, only the basics are necessary. Any parent can quickly pick up the fundamentals by talking to other coaches, reading a basic book on the sport, talking to an athlete, attending a coaching education workshop, and observing athletic contests. With younger children it is not the knowledge of the sport, but the knowledge of the child that is critical. Children will long remember who you are and how you treated them rather than the technique you taught them. Obviously, as the child grows older and more experienced, more professional coaching is necessary, but in most sports parents can take over a coaching role. Later, as you progress, there are many excellent coaching programs you can attend.

DO'S AND THE DON'TS

Teaching and coaching your own child represents one of the most delicate of challenges. It is easier to do if you are not coaching an entire team at the same time. If you are coaching a team on which your daughter plays, be aware of two potential problems.

1. Because she is your daughter, you may go overboard in giving her all the benefits. You certainly don't want to neglect your own child, but without your being aware of it she may end up with more privileges than the other members of the team.

2. The second type of problem is that in order to avoid bias, you may bend over backward and, in fact, neglect your child to prove to the others that you are not giving her special treatment.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, it is important that you have others observe your coaching, being particularly sensitive to your treatment of each individual athlete. It is also important to have a talk with your daughter ahead of time, letting her know of your dilemma. You may even ask her for suggestions, because "out of the mouths of babes" may come profound wisdom and understanding.

Once you have discovered the rewards of coaching, it is important to improve your knowledge. Take the time to read a good book on coaching principles and enroll in a coaching course if it is available to you. Just as your daughter will enjoy her sports more as she gains skill, so you will enjoy coaching more as you gain knowledge and experience.

Teaching and coaching your daughter on an individual basis should be a shared experience, a give-and-take where there is mutual respect and open discussion on every issue. As the child grows this is particularly important as ultimately it is the daughter who must do the performing.

When possible, mother and father should both be part of the coaching experience. As we will see later in the family section, this experience can be valuable in making the family unit more cohesive. Below is a series of do's and don'ts to keep in mind when training your daughter in any area, but especially in athletics.

THE DO'S

Treat your child the same as the other children.

Make it fun. The more your daughter enjoys sport, the more she will want to play.

Be patient. Initially she may be frightened and lack coordination, but with time and instruction she will learn.

Make sure she has the experience of performing the sport correctly. This develops pride.

Use clear and comprehensive language that your child understands.

Reduce the fear she may have by anticipating her anxiety. Humor is always effective, but sarcasm is not.

Be sure to demonstrate and describe skills carefully so she knows what is being asked of her.

Add skills in step-by-step increments so she may see the correct execution.

Remember that it is okay to make mistakes. It means you are trying.

Allow your daughter to ask questions. This means she is thinking.

Show respect: treat her as if you are learning this together.

Be positive and convince her she is making a contribution.

Give her a sense of being special and important.

Provide role models for your daughter. Expose her to other women in sports by attending school and college competitions, watching television programs, and reading women's sports and fitness magazines.

THE DON'TS

Do not yell or scream at your child or anyone else's. It is humiliating.

Do not condemn your daughter for poor play or failure.

Refrain from pointing out errors in front of others. Your daughter will lose face with her friends.

Do not expect her to learn things immediately. With practice she will improve.

Do not criticize or contradict your child's coach or referee in front of her. Discuss your concerns with them in private. Criticizing a coach or referee will cause confusion, poor performance, low morale, and poor sportsmanship.

It is natural to be frightened. Do not expect her to be immediately courageous.

Do not compare your daughter to her siblings or the more talented kids on the team.

Do not continue to bring up failures long after they have happened.

Do not ignore your child. She wants to be important and special in your eyes.

Do not expect your daughter to be a pro. Let her be a child enjoying and improving.

Do not ridicule or make fun of your daughter. This only leads to further self-punishment.

Avoid punishment for mistakes. Punishment leads to withdrawal and finally to giving up.

Do not make sports all work and no fun. Childhood is a time for joy. Let it be that way.

"Make sure your daughter's goal is her goal, not your goal."
Tracy Austin
Tennis champion

SPORT IN THE FAMILY

As long as someone in the family is an athlete, sport is a family affair. The money it takes to participate, the necessary equipment, the time involved in practices, adjusting and readjusting schedules to fit contests, and the joys and sorrows of success and failure are all tied to family interaction. The experience should be positive despite all the demands. Here are some suggestions for making your daughter's participation in sports a positive experience for the entire family:

1. Discuss the various sport options. Depending on your daughter's size, physical build, speed, strength, and the demands of the sport, there may be several sport options. A family discussion, along with observations of several sports, can help your daughter come to an important personal decision. She may want to talk to coaches or other athletes about their attitudes. If the family is involved, the family bond will become much greater.

2. The day of the contest should be a special one for your child. Regardless of the outcome of the contest, it can be something the family shares. To complain of the time it takes or the disruption it has caused can only make your daughter feel guilty. If, in addition, the competition is unsuccessful in your eyes, the psychological pain is compounded.

3. If you cannot attend contests be sure to indicate your interest and support in other ways. For example, when your child returns home, ask how she did, not whether she won. Let her tell you the fun and frustration so that you may both focus on the process.

4. Make time spent going to and from practices personal contact times. Your daughter will appreciate these special times together because they belong solely to her. This enhances her sense of importance.

5. Take time to view contests together. Give her the opportunity to be a critic. In addition to just watching your child, have the family attend other sporting events or watch them on television together.

6. Become students of the game. Books and articles can be shared, along with discussion about strategy, coaching and general information about the game.

7. All athletes need a support system, someone backing them when the going gets tough. They need someone who will talk to them, not judge them; someone who will listen to their frustrations, not point out their errors; someone who will share their pressures, not abandon them in time of stress. The most logical people to provide this support are parents.

8. Be aware that you and your daughter have made a commitment to her sport involvement that may require an adjustment in duties at home. Decide together how each family member will share responsibilities such as household chores, chauffeuring, and child care.

The ultimate role of parents is not to dictate to their children how to run their lives. If parents do this they are only producing dependent, weak, ineffective offspring. If parents use the sport model to teach their daughter how to make decisions for herself, she will be making a major step toward healthy growth.

YOUNG ATHLETE'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Throughout this pamphlet we have de-emphasized the role of winning — especially winning at all costs. We have done so for many reasons, the most important that it is not in the best interest of the child. Children need to *learn* to compete. To treat them as if they are professionals robs them of growth and childhood. Personal growth and development are of prime concern. The better prepared the young woman is for the competitive world, the more successful she will be. An obsession to win can be destructive not only to the less talented female but to the exceptionally talented as well. To emphasize our point, we would like you to become acquainted with the young athlete's bill of rights:*

1. The right to determine when to participate and in what sports, and to what degree of intensity and involvement.

2. The right to play in every game, no matter what her degree of physical ability or the relative importance of the game in terms of league competition.

3. The right to be taught the fundamentals of the sport by a qualified teacher/coach and to play on fields, courts, and rinks that have been adjusted proportionally to children.

4. The right to be coached by those who have been trained in or who have been made aware of the various stages of emotional and psychological development in children, and to be treated on a level equivalent to her emotional and physical maturity — not by standards of collegiate or professional sports.

5. The right to have a coach who places the child first, the team second, himself/herself third, and winning fourth; to feel free to laugh after a defeat and to have fun participating even while playing on a losing team; to be able to use play as an opportunity to test life; and not to be subjected to adult-imposed pressures to win.

6. The right to have a coach who is patient and supportive, as opposed to one who believes in a harsh, negative, "professional" approach; a coach who takes time to work with each athlete, regardless of ability or potential, and who offers periodic evaluation of the child's physical improvement and emotional growth as the season progresses.

7. The right to be treated as a member of a democracy, not a dictatorship, including the freedom to voice opinions openly to the coach without fear of repercussion.

8. The right to proper medical treatment and the right to play in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

9. The right to report to coach or parent any physical pain or emotional concerns such as fear or rejection without fear of ridicule or loss of esteem.

10. The right to freedom from physical and emotional punishment by her parents or the coach. Punishment leads only to fear and inhibition. The purpose of sports should be to help a child grow, feel expansive, and realize his or her potential.

*Adapted from "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes," from Guidelines for Children's Sports, Martens and Seefeldt, AAHPERD, 1979.

"Parents should not stress winning; they should stress giving 100% and trying your hardest."
Willye White
Five time track and field
Olympian

RECOMMENDED READING

Coaching Young Athletes, R. Martens et al., Human Kinetics, 1981

Guidelines for Children's Sports, Martens and Seefeldt, AAHPERD, 1979

Handbook for Youth Sports Coaches, edited by Vern Seefeldt, AAHPERD, 1986

Kidsports: A Survival Guide for Parents, Smith, Smith and Small, Addison Wesley, 1983

Raising My Child Athlete, L. Bunker and R. Rotella, Human Kinetics, 1986

Women's Sports & Fitness magazine, subscriptions available through the Women's Sports Foundation

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

American Coaching Effectiveness Program
P.O. Box 5076
Champaign, IL 61820
(217) 351-5076
Provides coaches' training course for certification nationwide.

National Association for Girls and Women in Sport
1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 476-3450
Provides technical knowledge on rules for sports, has national network of professionals in coaching and officiating, does some coaches' training.

National Youth Sports Coaches Association
2611 Old Okeechobee Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33409
(305) 684-1141
Conducts basic coaching certification program for beginners nationwide through local recreation departments.

Women's Sports Foundation
342 Madison Ave., Suite 728
New York, NY 10017
(212) 972-9170
(800) 227-3988
Provides information and referral on all questions pertaining to women's sports and fitness.

Youth Sports Institute
IM Sports Circle
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 353-6689
Conducts research on youth sports and disseminates information.

Contact your local recreation department for information on after-school programming.

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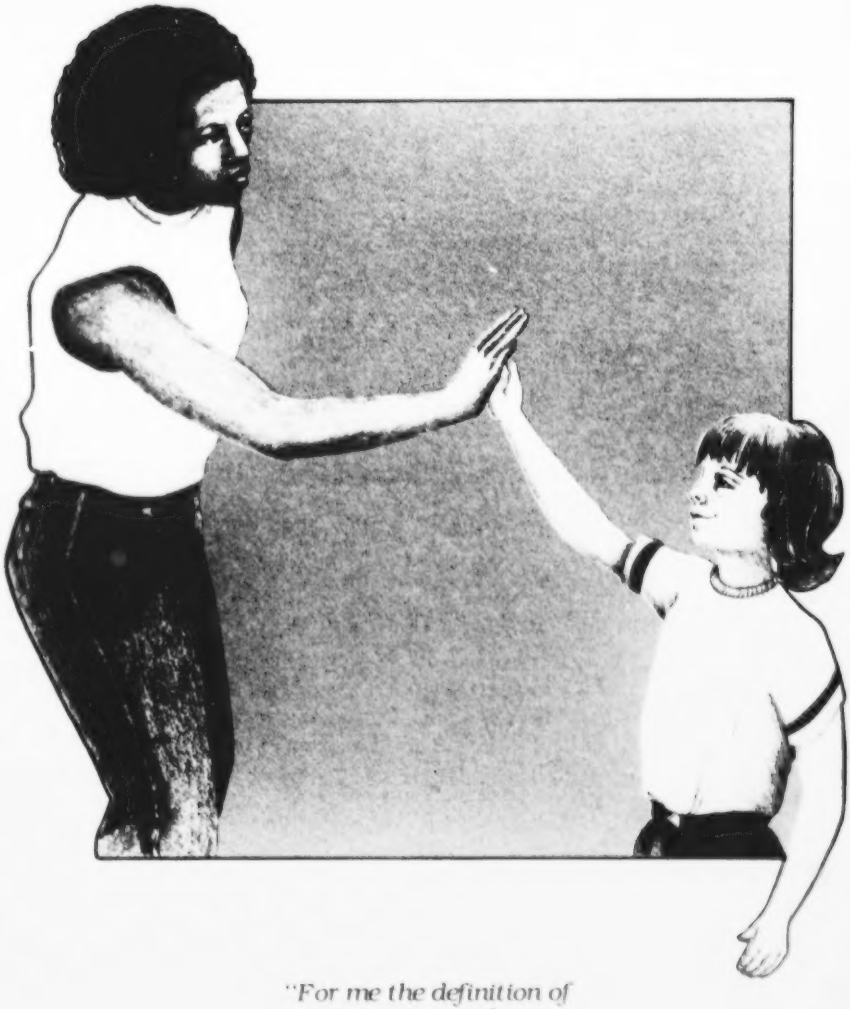

"For me the definition of winning is to reach your potential. I believe all girls as well as boys should be allowed this opportunity in sport and in life."
Billie Jean King
Tennis champion

WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION
342 Madison Ave. Suite 728 New York, N.Y. 10017